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*The Education and Training Inspectorate -
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CUSTOMER SERVICE EXCELLENCE

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**Department of Education
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Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure**



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Education and Training Inspectorate

Report of a Standard Inspection

**The Wallace High School
Lisburn**

Inspected: October 2007

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 CONTEXT

The Wallace High School is a co-educational voluntary grammar school situated in a pleasant residential area of Lisburn. The school draws its pupils from a wide surrounding area. At the time of the inspection the enrolment was 1,158 pupils, approximately 2% of whom are entitled to free school meals. In the past number of years the vast majority of the pupils attending the school have gained grade A in the transfer procedure. The school has identified 3.2% of the pupils as being in need of additional support with their learning.

1.2 FOCUS

The inspection focused on leadership and management at all levels across the school, and the extent to which self-evaluation procedures contribute to school improvement. Inspectors visited classes in most subjects and, in greater detail, the provision for art and design, chemistry and English. The school's arrangements for pastoral care, including child protection, were also inspected as was the school's approach to promoting healthy eating and physical activity.

1.3 THE VIEWS OF PARENTS, GOVERNORS, TEACHERS AND PUPILS

The arrangements for the inspection included the opportunity for the parents and the teaching staff to complete confidential questionnaires prior to the inspection as well as meetings with representatives from the Board of Governors (governors) and pupils from years 8, 12 and 13 and 14. Two hundred and thirty-six questionnaires were issued to the parents; 68% of these were returned to the Department of Education (DE), of which 57 contained written comments. The responses from the parental questionnaires indicated that most of these parents appreciated the hard work and commitment of the school to the education of their children, while a small minority raised some specific issues.

The representatives of the governors expressed their appreciation of the work of the staff, especially in the face of curriculum change and uncertainty over the future of transfer arrangements, the staff's support for extra-curricular activities and the excellent provision for pastoral care. The governors stressed their commitment to academic provision, the importance of ensuring high standards and their support for the Principal and the leadership team.

Just over half of the teachers completed a confidential questionnaire. Many of the returns highlighted their commitment to the formal and informal work of the school, the school's strengths and its support for its pupils. A significant minority raised a number of issues relating to internal communications.

The pupils talked enthusiastically about the support they receive from their teachers. They reported that they feel safe in school and enjoy participation in a wide range of extra-curricular activities. From the discussions there is evidence that the pupils can approach a range of staff should they need to discuss any worries they may have.

The Education and Training Inspectorate (Inspectorate) discussed with the Principal and representatives of the governors the issues emerging from both questionnaires and the discussions.

1.4 PASTORAL CARE AND CHILD PROTECTION

THE ARRANGEMENTS FOR PASTORAL CARE AND CHILD PROTECTION

The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care and child protection has important strengths. The school has procedures in place which implement the guidance outlined in the relevant DE Circulars and has identified appropriately a few areas for improvement.

Among the strengths are:

- the very caring and supportive ethos in the school;
- the effective work and support provided by the pastoral care team;
- the additional support in place for the pupils including the counselling service and the mentoring programme;
- the effective communication and working with external agencies to support and guide the pupils; and
- the rich and varied opportunities for the pupils to engage in social, cultural and extra-curricular activities.

The few areas for improvement include the need to:

- consult further with the staff, pupils and parents when revising pastoral related policies; and
- monitor and evaluate further the effectiveness of the pastoral care policies and taught programme.

1.5 HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

The school gives excellent attention to promoting health and well-being, including opportunities for healthy eating and physical activity. There are effective policies and programmes in place, for example water provision, healthier vending and themed taster days in the canteen, which encourage the pupils to adopt healthy lifestyles. The catering supervisor and head of home economics have formed effective links to develop the school dinner menus to meet the nutritional standards.

2. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' WORK

2.1 STANDARDS

The pupils are hard-working and diligent with many producing work of a high standard. Overall, the standards achieved by the pupils across the subjects at General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) level and General Certificate of Education (GCE) Advanced (A) level are satisfactory or better. In 2007, just over 90% of pupils achieved grades A* to C in at least seven GCSE subjects, which is the average for similar Northern Ireland selective schools; this has remained generally steady over the last three years. In 2007, just over 76% of pupils achieved grades A to C in at least three GCE A Level subjects, which is well above the average for similar Northern Ireland selective schools; this proportion has increased over the last three years. More details on the examination results are found in Appendix 4.

2.2 QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING

In most of the lessons observed during the inspection, the quality of the teaching displayed good features; in the majority the quality was consistently good or better. In a minority of lessons, the teaching and learning activities lacked the variety and challenge necessary to engage the pupils productively. Despite the excellent examples of innovative strategies reflected in some of the teaching, there is a lack of a wider professional debate across the whole school to reflect on and share amongst all staff how effective learning practices can raise standards.

2.3 THE LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

The Principal, who has recently resumed her post after being absent for some seven months through injury, and the broader leadership team, a significant minority of whom are recently appointed, are strongly committed to raising further the standards being achieved across the school in public examinations. The school has made a good start to self-evaluation, to school and to departmental development planning which is tightly framed by a consideration of the issues arising from achievement, perceptions of under-achievement and decision-making about the introduction of new courses. In order to raise further achievements across the school, the Principal now needs to develop the roles and responsibilities of those within the senior leadership team and to review the self-evaluation, management and decision-making processes to ensure wider consultation, to make a greater use of the analysis of benchmarking data, and to bring a broader focus on learning and on preparation for adult and working life. The School Development Plan meets the requirements of the Education (School Development Plans) Regulations NI 2005 Order.

2.4 THE SCHOOL ACCOMMODATION

Limitations in the school's accommodation are adversely affecting the provision in specialist and key areas including, for example, the library, art, drama and IT and restricting the range of teaching strategies which can be used in some classrooms.

3. **SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS**

3.1 The strengths of the school include:

- the diligent and responsive pupils who are polite, courteous, friendly and well-supported by the staff;
- the hard-working and committed teachers;
- the quality of the teaching in most of the lessons observed;
- the standards achieved in the three subjects under focus;
- the quality of the programme for health and well-being; and
- the range and variety of extra-curricular activities and other opportunities for the pupils which are supported by the staff.

3.2 The areas for improvement include the need to:

- disseminate more consistently the existing effective learning and teaching approaches in order to raise further the standards being achieved; and
- develop the quality, breadth and impact of self-evaluation and planning, to include a better use of data analysis (including relevant benchmarking) and evidence gathered through the evaluation of classroom practice, in order to inform a more strategic approach to decision-making.

4. **CONCLUSION**

In the areas inspected, the school has important strengths in most of its educational and pastoral provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement which the school has the capacity to address.

The school's progress on the areas for improvement will be followed-up by monitoring visits, conducted by the District Inspector.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

- The excessive speed and volume of traffic at key times, together with the limited visibility where the school entrance joins the main road, is a potential road safety hazard.

STATISTICAL INFORMATION

- 1.1 i. School: The Wallace High v. Date of Inspection: W/C 15.10.07
 ii. School Reference Number: 442-0051 vi. Standard Inspection
 iii. Age Range: 11-18
 iv. Status: Voluntary Grammar

1.2 Intake/Enrolment

School Year	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08
Year 8 Intake	170	171	172	172	170
Total enrolment	1158	1157	1152	1165	1158

1.3 Attendance

Year 2006/07	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	Average 2006/07	NI Average 2005/06
% Attendance	96.7	94.5	95	94.4	95.7	94.2	88.9	94	95

1.4 i. Total Number of Teachers:

79

iii. Contact ratio (percentage of timetabled time in direct class contact):

0.70

ii. PTR (Pupil/Teacher Ratio):

14.64

Year 2007/08	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	TOTAL
Enrolment: Boys	84	97	100	89	97	75	55	597
Enrolment: Girls	86	74	73	80	74	79	95	561
Enrolment: Total	170	171	173	169	171	154	150	1158
PTR	15.72	16.335	16.676	14.147	14.741	12.944	12.524	

1.5 Staying On Rate (2006/07) (Current year 13/14 as proportion of year 12 from 1/2 years previously)

Year 13	83.9	NI Av Year 13	88.8
Year 14	84.7	NI Av Year 14	85.0

1.6 Leavers Destinations

2005/06	Year 12	NI%	Year 13/14	NI%
Total Number of Leavers	35		154	
Another School	22.8%	17.2	0%	1
Employment	8.3%	4.3	3%	4.6
Full-time Further Education	54.3%	58.5	8%	9.8
Full-time Higher Education	N/A	N/A	87%	80.8
Full-time Training	14.3%	15.4	0%	1.1
Seeking Employment/Unemployed	0%	0.9	1%	0.9
Unknown/Long Term Sick/Pregnant	0%	3.8	1%	1.8

APPENDIX 3

1.7 NAME OF SCHOOL: The Wallace High School **SCHOOL YEAR:** 2007/2008

GCSE	2005	2006	2007
Percentage of Year 12 taking GCSE in at least 5 subjects	99.4	99.4	99.4
Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 7 subjects	92	90.4	90.4
Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects	97.2	96.4	96.4
GCE A2 Level or equivalent	2005	2006	2007
Percentage of Year 14 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 3 A2 levels	64.5	74.5	76.4
Percentage of Year 14 obtaining Grades E or above in at least 3 A2 levels	95.7	96.7	98

Within this report, when commenting on examination results of individual subjects, the respective CCEA average is used as a proxy for the corresponding average for all pupils in NI taking that subject.

EXAMINATION RESULTS

Table showing the GCSE and GCE A level subject results over the previous three years ending in June 2007, in comparison with the respective Northern Ireland (NI) averages

Table 1

	More than 10 percentage points above	Between 5 and 10 percentage points above	Within 5 percentage points	Between 5 and 10 percentage points below	More than 10 percentage points below
GCSE A*-C			Art & Design English English Literature Geography History Home Economics Information Technology Mathematics Additional Mathematics Religious Studies Double Award Science 1 st Subject Sport/PE Studies	Business Studies French Spanish Technology & Design	German Music
GCE A Level A-C	Design & Technology Geography	English Literature French German Music Religious Studies	Art & Design Business Studies Chemistry History Home Economics Mathematics Further Mathematics Physics Politics Spanish Sport/PE Studies	Biology Economics Information Technology	Computer Studies/ Computing

Table showing the spread of the NI subject averages which have been used in the determination of Table 1.

Table 2

	100% - 96%	95% - 86%	85% - 76%	75% - 66%	65% - 0%
GCSE A*-C	Art & Design English Mathematics Music	Business Studies English Literature French Geography History Home Economics Information Technology Additional Mathematics Religious Studies Double Award Science 1 st Subject Spanish Sport/PE Studies Technology & Design	German		
GCE A Level A-C		Art & Design Business Studies English Literature French Geography German History Mathematics Further Mathematics Music Politics Religious Studies Spanish	Biology Chemistry Design & Technology Economics Home Economics Information Technology Physics Sport/PE Studies		Computer Studies/ Computing

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